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CHFS Focus Employee Spotlight: Cabinet DCBS staff deploy to Gulf Coast to aid with food stamp benefits enrollment

By Anya Armes Weber

The Cabinet continues its support for victims of Hurricane Katrina with a recent deployment of staff from the Children and Family Services office.

Ten food stamp eligibility workers from Department for Community Based Services offices across the state spent a week in Mobile, Ala helping Gulf Coast residents get federal assistance.



They were part of a multistate response from members of the 49-state Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC), which provides interstate mutual aid. Through EMAC, a disaster-impacted state can request and receive assistance quickly and efficiently from other member states to resolve liability and reimbursement issues. Staff worked in the Mobile Civic Center enrolling eligible families in the federal Food Stamp Program.

In Kentucky, the DCBS' Division of Family Support determines food stamp eligibility. Several dozen DCBS staff volunteered to help in the disaster recovery efforts, Cornett said, but only 10 were requested.

"I am so proud of these staff for their selflessness in traveling to help Gulf Coast residents register for family assistance," DCBS Commissioner Tom Emberton Jr. said. "With food stamp benefits, many of the displaced and coping families can begin to restabilize themselves and make a new start. Basic needs like food and proper nutrition are essential to any family. The staff members we've deployed have excellent customer service skills to help eligible applicants get all the aid they qualify for."

DCBS staff detailed to Mobile and their work counties are as follows.

Campbell County: Cindy Mickelson; Daviess County: Debbie Fitzgerald and Lori Huff; Hart County: Betty Nunn; Hopkins County: Dana Dacy and Lana Qualls; Jefferson County: Joyce Pumphrey; Montgomery County:

Denise Amburgey and Jane Hammack; Pendleton County: Sandra Heck.

Before they departed for Mobile, many of the volunteers described their reasons for and feelings about volunteering.

Dana Dacy, Hopkins County Family Support Specialist II

I have been with the Cabinet for four years. As soon as I read the e-mail for volunteers, I felt compelled to volunteer. I think you automatically feel a special sympathy for people who have survived a disaster of this magnitude. But we try each day to provide the best customer service possible to each and every person we see.

I am thankful to the state of Kentucky and its officials for being willing to give us this opportunity and I will do my best reflect us all in the best possible light.

Debbie Fitzgerald, Daviess County K-TAP/Family Medical Program Specialist, Green River Region

I have been with the state for 22 years, and this is my first involvement with a natural disaster, other than small county floods. I volunteered because I want to help some of the victims in any way that I can. I also volunteered at the emergency operations center phone bank for a day.

I want (those affected by Katrina) to know that people from Kentucky really do care about them and what they are going through.

I have gotten a lot of e-mails from co-workers thanking me for doing this. They are so glad that Kentucky is sending help for these people and are happy to be covering for me while I am gone. Green River has a great bunch of folks to work with. They are a wonderful team.

I hope my customer service techniques are good at all times, but because of the nature of what I know these people have been through already, I hope my most caring side shows through.

Sandra Heck, Pendleton County Field Service Supervisor, Regional Claims Supervisor

I have been with the Cabinet for eight years and have worked in most of the eight counties in the Northern Kentucky Region. I have two great teams, and their hard work is what allows me to leave my offices for a week and not worry that Kentucky, and our counties in particular, will be neglected.

I plan on treating the people in Alabama the same as I treat my own customers here at home – with respect and professionalism.

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I am active in my community and have been with the volunteer fire department for 10 years. I am a certified emergency medical technician and a captain on the Pendleton County Search and Rescue team. With this background, I just felt compelled to do anything I could for the people down south. I also have a strong connection with the victims of this hurricane, having been through the flood of 1997 in Falmouth and Pendleton County that wiped out 70 to 80 percent of my town. I know this type of devastation and how it can affect a person physically and mentally.

**Lori Huff, Daviess County
Field Services Supervisor**

After Katrina, I watched all the devastation on television and wanted to do something to help. When I got the call for volunteers to assist in Alabama, I thought this would be the perfect opportunity. I am hoping to give some relief with food stamp assistance to those in need.

I am very glad to be able to assist those in need as I have done with the state for 14 years. I have some experience with assisting people during disasters. We had flooding problems in Owensboro several years ago, and the flooding forced people from their homes. In Mobile, I will feel compassion for and serve all customers effectively regardless of their situation.

**Cynthia Mickelson, Campbell County
Family Support Case Manager**

I have taken disaster relief classes from the American Red Cross, so I have some knowledge of how to help people affected by disaster get back on their feet. When this opportunity arose, I felt this is another opportunity for me to use the skills that I have to assist.

I expect to learn about others and hope to be able to share my skills in assisting our fellow workers from Alabama by providing the best services to those that have experienced the devastation of Katrina.

I have always felt that customers need to have someone who will listen in their time of crisis, and I have and will always continue to listen to their needs and provide what I can to assist them.

I am sure that whatever I can do to assist will be appreciated. In return I will be fulfilled knowing that even though I do not have the money that I would like to be able to give, I can give of myself and my time.

**Betty Nunn, Hart County
Family Support Specialist III**

As I have watched coverage of Hurricane Katrina, I have given much thought and prayer for the people along the

coast. I have tried to help by donating items and giving my money and time to stand out at the road block in our small town of Hardyville, where we collected more than \$2,500.

When the e-mail crossed my desk about going to Alabama to help, it took only a few minutes for me to respond that I would love the opportunity to go.

As I go into this endeavor I hope in some small way I can brighten someone's day with a smile and some help, and hopefully they will see that I have the utmost empathy for them.

Kentucky is a very friendly state, and as workers of the Food Stamp Program, we are trained to do all we can to help the ones in need. This is our opportunity to do so for our state and much more for ourselves.

**Lisa Qualls, Hopkins County
Field Services Supervisor**

I have been with the state for 26 years. I volunteered for this mission because I feel I need to do more in helping these people. You never know when something like this might hit home, and we would need someone to show they care about us and be willing to go that extra mile to help out.

I feel this has already shown some people that Kentucky is a caring state because of all the time we have spent collecting money and goods to send down there.

We have served several Hurricane victims in our office, and I know we have reached down deep in our hearts when it comes to these people. I feel our office has really bent over backward for them, and I will continue to do the same in Mobile.

**CHFS Focus Program Spotlight: September Food
Safety Education Month**

Hand washing, good health habits appropriate all year

September was Food Safety Education Month in Kentucky by proclamation of Governor Ernie Fletcher. The Department for Public Health's Food Safety Branch, in cooperation with local health departments, the Kentucky Restaurant Association, the Kentucky Grocers Association, the Kentucky Food Safety and Food Security Task Force and



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the International Food Safety and Education Council took part in observance of Food Safety Education Month in Kentucky.

The principles of Food Safety Education Month are useful year round. This year's observance focused attention on the importance of hand washing and personal hygiene with the theme "Keep hands clean with good hygiene."

"Fortunately, most food-borne illnesses can be easily prevented with proper hand washing and good personal hygiene," said Clyde Bolton, director of the Division of Public Health Protection and Safety.

During September, state and local health departments, food service operations and retail markets conducted training activities for restaurant and food industry professionals and communicated the importance of food safety to the public.

One of the most important and easiest ways to prevent the spread of food-borne illness is by washing your hands before preparing food. Then, remember to wash your hands between handling raw and ready-to-eat foods.

Cabinet employees can help Kentucky keep a safe food supply by practicing good food handling skills throughout the year.

If you would like more information, call the state Food Safety Branch at (502) 564-7181.

CHFS Recognizes October as Employee Appreciation Month

Although Public Employee Recognition Week is Oct. 3-7, the Cabinet for Health and Family Services plans to stretch the observance out over the entire month of October. CHFS will sponsor activities and provide useful information on behalf of employees as part of this appreciation and recognition effort. The CHFS Office of Human Resource Management is spearheading the Cabinet's employee recognition project.



An employee appreciation Web page will offer CHFS employees rapid, easy access to useful information on topics ranging from health issues to state employee benefits. In addition, each weekly edition of the CHFS Focus newsletter in October will spotlight a different Cabinet program area, featuring special achievements and news of interest from Frankfort and around the state.

"CHFS employees are the driving force that has made Kentucky a leader in providing quality health and human services," said CHFS Secretary James Holsinger Jr., M.D. "The talent, skills, devotion and commitment of CHFS employees have improved the quality of life and health of countless Kentuckians. In fact, there's not a single Kentuckian who isn't somehow protected or served by this Cabinet through the hard work and excellence of our employees."

The following is a schedule of events for CHFS Employee Recognition Month:

Employee Recognition Kick-off: Oct. 3, 11 a.m. – noon
Secretary Holsinger and others will lead an employee appreciation rally in the lobby of the CHR Building to officially launch Employee Recognition Month.

Nutrition: Oct. 4, 11 a.m. – 1 p.m.

The winning entry from the CHFS 5 A Day Challenge recipe contest will be among the entrée selections at the CHR Café. Nutrition-related door prizes also will be awarded. Louisville's Chef Nancy will be on hand to demonstrate how to prepare healthy snacks using fresh, locally grown produce - a great alternative to high-fat, high-calorie, low-nutrition foods.

Wellness and Health Insurance Expo: Oct. 6, 11 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Free health screenings including body mass index, blood pressure, diabetes, cardiovascular health and stroke risk assessment will be offered in the CHR Building lobby. Brochures on various health topics will also be available and door prizes will be awarded. The state's new employee health insurance third-party administrator, Humana, will be on hand to provide information and answer questions regarding the new self-insurance plan for state workers.

Celebration of Employee Excellence: Oct. 14

CHFS employees will have a chance to recognize one another for their work performance and contributions to excellence while helping the Kentucky Employees Charitable Campaign. The CHFS Employee Recognition Committee will take orders for carnations of appreciation adorned with certificates of excellence that can be presented to co-workers as a way to say "Good job!" Carnation orders will be taken Oct. 3-7 in the CHR Building lobby from 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. each day. Orders will be delivered for pick-up and presentation Oct. 14. Carnations will also be available for sale that day.

Department and Office Events: Oct. 3 – 31

Throughout Employee Recognition Month, offices are encouraged to plan healthy pot luck luncheons or other

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special activities as a way to show appreciation for and enjoy a time of fellowship with co-workers.

"I hope all CHFS employees will get into the spirit of Employee Recognition Month and say those thank-yous we all mean to say but somehow seem to put off until the 'right time,'" Holsinger said. "What better time than Employee Recognition Month to tell team members, supervisors or other fellow employees how much they inspire you or how much you appreciate their support and contributions to the job? A heartfelt pat on the back for a job well done means a lot and it's something we should all do more of."

Summaries and photos of the employee recognition events, healthy recipes and links to health and nutritional information will be available online at:

http://cfnet.ky.gov/Agencies/ohrm/Employee_Recognition_Committee/ERC_index.asp.

Governor Fletcher to sign Domestic Violence Month proclamation

New housing assistance program for victims to be announced

Governor Ernie Fletcher will proclaim October as Domestic Violence Awareness Month in Kentucky at a ceremony Oct. 3 at 1:15 p.m. in the Capitol rotunda. The Governor will also use the occasion to announce a new housing assistance program for displaced victims of domestic violence.



"Domestic violence has a devastating impact on its victims," said Governor Fletcher. "It endangers children, destroys families and creates a culture of secrecy and isolation that affects us all."

According to the U.S. Bureau of Justice, by the most conservative estimate, each year 1 million women are victims of domestic violence. During the six months following a domestic violence episode, one-third of battered women are re-victimized.

"Domestic Violence Awareness Month is a time for the commonwealth to renew its commitment to bringing an end to violence in the home and restore hope and healing

to victims," said Lisa Holmes, president of the Kentucky Domestic Violence Association.

The Kentucky Domestic Violence Association is a coalition of Kentucky's 16 domestic violence centers. With funding from CHFS, the federal government, communities, private grants and donations, Kentucky's domestic violence programs sheltered more than 4,300 women and children in 2004 and provided non-residential services to another 25,000 individuals.

Sharon Hilborn, director of the Division of Child Abuse and Domestic Violence Services in CHFS, said that during the proclamation ceremony, Governor Fletcher will introduce Safe Start, a new program aimed at helping displaced domestic violence victims obtain safe, affordable housing.

The program, offered by the Kentucky Housing Corporation, provides housing vouchers to domestic violence victims in shelters. "Clients not only will be eligible for housing assistance opportunities, but they'll also benefit from supportive services to address the causes of their homelessness as well as other needs to increase their chances for success," said Ben Cook, chief executive officer for KHC.

Domestic Violence Awareness Month has been an annual observance since 1987 to raise public awareness of the personal, community and social impact of domestic violence as a means to make homes and families safer and stronger.

Jefferson County consultant, foster parent chosen as 'Children's Champion'

By Anya Armes Weber

A Jefferson County Cabinet employee was recently named a "Champion for Children" by the state's leading child abuse prevention advocacy group.

Last month, Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky recognized Quintilla Weathers as one of four recipients of the 2005 Champion for Children awards at its ninth annual "Kids Are Worth It" conference in Lexington.

Weathers works for the state part time as a community service consultant and is also a self-employed foster parent. She has served on one of two Neighborhood Place Community Councils for the past decade, helping build





Community Partnerships for Protecting Children in the Jefferson, Fayette and Barren River regions and actively participating in Louisville's Neighborhood Place network.

She serves on numerous committees touching issues of child abuse and prevention, foster care, childhood lead poisoning, health for mothers and their newborns, domestic violence, parental support and leadership and other community issues.

Health insurance open enrollment information

From CHFS Office of Human Resource Management

Letters detailing this year's open enrollment have been mailed from the Personnel Cabinet to all participants in the Kentucky Employees Health Plan. Employees who have not received a letter should receive it soon.

Employees may apply online during the open enrollment period Oct. 17-Oct. 28.

For more information on open enrollment, contact the Member Services Branch toll-free at (888) 581-8834 or in Frankfort at (502) 564-6534, or call your department/office health insurance coordinator.

CHFS Health Tip of the Week: Prevent pediculosis with early detection and screening

By Anne Parr, R. N.

Now that children are back in school, pediculosis or head lice may be ready for school, but American families are not.



Head lice have become well established in the child population for many reasons. Emphasis should be placed on early detection and prevention by screening children on a regular basis.

Anyone can get head lice -- mainly from head-to-head contact. Here are some steps to help keep head lice and their eggs out of your child's hair:

- Watch for signs of head lice, such as frequent head scratching. Many people associate lice with poor personal hygiene, but this is not necessarily true. Anyone can get head lice. Although these insects cannot hop, jump or fly, they are easily transmitted

from one child to another via head-to-head contact, or the sharing of hats, combs, brushes, headrests, etc.

- Check all family members for lice and nits (lice eggs) at least once a week. Only those infested should be treated. Lice are reddish-brown wingless insects; nits are grayish-white, oval-shaped and attached at an angle to the side of the hair shaft.
- Be sure not to confuse nits with dandruff which appears as easily dislodged bright white, irregularly shaped clumps stuck to the hair shaft or encircling the hair shaft. Lice treatment is not appropriate for dandruff.
- Consult your pharmacist or physician before using pesticide lice treatments for women who are pregnant or nursing or people with allergies, asthma, epilepsy, pre-existing medical conditions or before using to treat lice or nits in the eyebrows or eyelashes. Never use a pesticide lice treatment on or near the eyes.
- Remember that all lice-killing products are pesticides. If you choose to purchase an over-the-counter treatment, follow the directions carefully and use with caution. Manual removal is the best alternative whenever possible and especially when treatment products have failed.
- Remove all nits by separating hair in sections and picking out attached nits. This assures total lice treatment.
- Wash bedding and recently worn clothing in hot water and dry in hot dryer. Combs and brushes may be soaked in hot water (not boiling) for 10 minutes. Vacuum up fallen hairs that have attached nits and vacuum all upholstered furniture, rugs, stuffed animals and car seats.
- Check for lice on a regular basis. This is the best way to protect your family and community.

Employee Enrichment

By Anya Armes Weber



Employee Enrichment is a weekly feature for CHFS staff. These tips for making work better focus on team building, customer service and personal development.

It's Employee Recognition Week, and managers can do a lot to improve staff morale and retention by following a five-step "PRIDE" model created by speaker, author and business performance consultant Greg Smith of Atlanta.

Here is his model:

- P** - Provide a positive working environment.
- R** - Recognize, reinforce and reward individual efforts.
- I** - Involve and engage everyone.
- D** - Develop the potential of your workforce.
- E** - Evaluate and hold managers accountable.

Provide a positive working environment

The key to this, Smith writes, is enabling flexibility. A satisfied worker feels he or she has freedom to try new things and grow professionally. Staff members feel free to express themselves in a flexible workplace.

Recognize, reinforce and reward individual efforts

People have a basic need to feel appreciated, writes Smith, and recognition programs help meet that need. Something simple will do. Efforts could include pats on the back at staff meetings or monthly “mini” ceremonies to tout staff accomplishments.

Involve and engage everyone

Idea sharing has two benefits: It helps staff feel like active participants in the agency and it can generate some great new plans or problem solving. Smith says it can “create a healthy climate of innovation and creativity at all levels of an organization.”

Develop the potential of your workforce

Being able to develop new skills is just as important as salary for many workers. Smith cites a study that shows an average 10 percent increase in workforce education level leads to an 8.6 percent gain in total productivity.

Evaluate and hold managers accountable

Smith says that offices with high employee turnover likely have managers who need some extra help. Managers who are periodically evaluated by staff can improve the office environment by responding to their employees’ needs. Leadership can reward good management the same way supervisors reward their staff.